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A SURVEY OF FLES PRACTICES.

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A SURVEY WAS CONDUCTED IN THE SPRING OF 1961 BY TWO EXPERIENCED TEACHERS OF THE TEACHING OF FOREIGN LANGUAGES IN THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOLS (FLES). NEW AND OLD PROGRAMS IN VARIOUS CITIES WERE OBSERVED AND EVALUATED BY VISITS TO 62 SCHOOL SYSTEMS IN 29 STATES. AREAS OF CONCERN INCLUDED--(1) PROGRAM, (2) TEACHERS, (3) MATERIALS, (4) CLASSROOM TECHNIQUES, (5) ADMINISTRATIVE PROBLEMS, (6) PROVISIONS FOR COORDINATION AND SUPERVISION, AND (7) PROGRAM EVALUATION METHODS. REPORTS IN THIS SERIES ARE ED 003 940 THROUGH ED 003 960. (RS)

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A Survey of FLES Practices

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A Survey of FLES Practices

By Nancy V. Alkonis and Mary A. Brophy

One of the areas that the Modern Language Association has undertaken to investigate, as part of a contract with the U.S. Office of Education under the National Defense Education Act, is the teaching of foreign languages in the elementary schools. A statistical survey, "Foreign Languages in the Elementary Schools of the United States, 1959-60," prepared by Marjorie Breunig under the general supervision of J. Wesley Childers, Director of Research of the MLA Foreign Language Program Research Center, is published in this Supplement. The present survey is evaluative rather than statistical and was made in an attempt to get at the quality as well as the quantity of foreign-language teaching at this level.

When the MLA in 1952 obtained a grant from the Rockefeller Foundation to investigate the role that foreign-language learning should play in American life, William Riley Parker, at that time Executive Secretary of the Association and Director of its Foreign Language Program, felt that foreign-language learning at this level offered great possibilities. And Kenneth Mildenberger, as Assistant Director of the Foreign Language Program, made in 1953 the first survey of foreign-language study in the elementary schools, which he, for convenience, abbreviated to FLES. His 1953 survey was followed by two annual surveys in 1954 and 1955. In 1956 the Steering Committee of the MLA issued the following Policy Statement on FLES:

"After more than three years of studying a variety of reports on the teaching of foreign languages in the public elementary schools, we express our approval of this popular movement in American education. In our judgment the movement deserves the support of parents and educational administrators because: (1) it recognizes the evidence concerning the process of language learning, introducing study of a second language to children at an age when they are naturally curious about language, when they have fewest inhibitions, and when they imitate most easily new sounds and sound patterns; (2) it recognizes the fact that real proficiency in the use of a foreign language requires progressive learning over an extended period.

"It is our further judgment that the public should be warned against faddish aspects of this movement. No new venture in American education can long prosper without the wholehearted support of parents, teachers, and educational administrators in a given community. Proponents of foreign-language study in the elementary schools should not, therefore, initiate programs until (1) a majority of the parents concerned approve at least an experimental program, and (2) local school boards and administrators are convinced that necessary preparations have been made.

"Necessary preparations include: (1) recruitment of an adequate number of interested teachers who have both skill in guiding children and the necessary language qualifications; (2) availability of material appropriate to each age level, with new approaches and a carefully planned syllabus for each grade, and (3) adequate provisions for appraisal.

"The success of existing programs thus initiated, prepared for, and appraised convinces us of the urgent need of providing, for children who have the ability and desire, the opportunity for continuous progress in language study into and through junior and senior high school."

In January 1961, the MLA held a conference of authorities in this field and out of the conference came the need for a revised Policy Statement, developed and authorized by the Advisory and Liaison Committees of the MLA:

"A. *Five Years Later.* Since the publication in 1956 of the first MLA statement of FLES there has been increasing awareness of the need for an early start to foreign-language learning. There is equal awareness of the dangers of inadequate attempts to meet this need. Hundreds of communities have ignored our warning against 'faddish aspects of this movement' and our insistence upon 'necessary preparations.' Many of the resulting programs have been wasteful and disappointing, and they have misled many citizens about the nature and value of foreign-language learning.

"B. *Redefinition.* We must sharpen our definition of FLES. It is not an end in itself but the elementary-school (K-6) part of a language-learning program that should extend unbroken through grade 12. It has 15- or 20-minute sessions at least three times a week as an integral part of the school day. It concerns itself primarily with learning the four language skills, beginning with listening and speaking. Other values (improved understanding of language in general, intercultural understanding, broadened horizons), though important, are secondary.

"C. *FLES in Sequence.* We believe that FLES, as here defined, is an essential part of the long sequence, ten years or more, needed to approach mastery of a second language in school. There is good evidence that the learning of a second language considerably quickens and eases the learning of a third language, even when there is little or no relation between the languages learned. Since children imitate skillfully and with few inhibitions in the early school years, the primary grades (K-3) are the ideal place to begin language learning, and the experience is itself exciting and rewarding.

"D. *Priority.* If a school system can not provide both a FLES program and a six-year secondary-school foreign-language sequence (grades 7-12), it should work *first* toward establishing the grade 7-12 sequence. Unless there is a solid junior and senior-high-school program of foreign-language learning with due stress on the listening and speaking skills and fully articulated with the previous instruction, FLES learnings wither on the vine.

"E. *Articulation.* It requires: 1) a foreign-language program in grades 7 and 8 for graduates of FLES, who should never be placed with beginners at *any* grade level; 2) a carefully planned coordination of the FLES and secondary-school programs; 3) a frequent interchange of visits and information among the foreign-language teachers at all levels; 4) an over-all coordination by a single foreign-language supervisor or by a committee of administrators. These cooperative efforts should result in a common core of language learning that will make articulation smooth and effective.

"F. *Experimental Programs.* Experimentation is desirable in education, but we now know enough about FLES methods and materials to obviate the need for 'pilot' or 'experimental' programs if these adjectives mean no more than 'tentative' or 'reluctant.' If a shortage of teachers makes it impossible to offer instruction to all the pupils in a grade, a partial FLES program is an acceptable temporary expedient, but it will pose a special scheduling problem in grade 7. An 'experimental' program should be a genuine experiment, not a desperate, inadequately planned program instituted by community pressure against the advice of language authorities in the field.

"Experimentation in *methods* should be undertaken only after teachers and administrators are thoroughly familiar with current theories of foreign-language learning and with current practices in successful FLES programs. The development of experimental teaching *materials* should be undertaken only after teachers are thoroughly familiar with existing materials.

"G. *The Teacher.* Ideally he should be an expert in the foreign language he teaches, with near-native accent and fluency, and also skillful in teaching young children. Few teachers are currently expert in both areas. If a teacher's foreign-language accent is not good, he should make every effort to improve it, and meanwhile he should rely on discs or tapes to supply authentic model voices for his pupils. But since language is communication, and a child cannot communicate with a phonograph or a tape recorder, no FLES learning can be wholly successful without the regular presence in the classroom of a live model who is also an expert teacher. The shortage of such doubly skilled teachers is the most serious obstacle to the success of FLES. To relieve this shortage every institution that trains future elementary-school teachers should offer a major in one or more foreign languages.

"H. *Cautions.* A FLES program should be instituted only if: 1) it is an integral and serious part of the school day; 2) it is an integral and serious part of the total foreign-language program in the school system; 3) there is close articulation with later foreign-language learning; 4) there are available FL specialists or elementary-school teachers with an adequate command of the foreign-language; 5) there is a planned syllabus and a sequence of appropriate teaching materials; 6) the program has the support of the administration; 7) the high-school teachers of the foreign language in the local school system recognize the same long-range objectives and practice some of the same teaching techniques as the FLES teachers."

In our attempt to find out what was happening in FLES classes throughout the country, we were fortunate in securing the services of two experienced teachers at this level, who obtained leave of absence from their school systems to make an on-the-spot survey during the second semester of the academic year 1960-61.

They have visited sixty-two school systems in twenty-nine states and the District of Columbia, observing new and old programs in large cities and small towns. We hope that this account of their observations will be of some help in the evaluation of this dramatic and portentous area of foreign-language learning.

Donald D. Walsh

THE QUALITY of a FLES program, as of any other language program at any level, depends upon certain significant and fundamental factors. We concerned ourselves primarily with the following basic and essential questions in each school system that we visited: (1) What are the purposes of the program? (2) Who teaches the FLES classes? (3) What teaching materials are used? (4) How effective are the classroom techniques? (5) How are the administrative problems solved? (6) What is the place of FLES in the total FL program? (7) What provision is made for coordination and supervision? (8) How is the FLES program evaluated?

Objectives: Although there is some basic agreement among educators that the aims of FLES are linguistic and cultural, we found much disagreement in state' theory and even more in practice. The linguistic aim is generally recognized as the acquisition of the four skills: listening comprehension, speaking, reading, and writing. In all but two or three of the sixty-two school systems visited we were told that the primary purpose of the program was the development of these skills. We saw evidence in fewer than ten that this was in fact happening. In these schools, situated in different sections of the country, the skills were being taught in sequence—listening comprehension and speaking preceded reading and writing. The programs were coordinated and the content was controlled. The teachers had acceptable oral competence and insisted on accuracy in both sound and form. There was constant correction and repetition. We heard children speaking a foreign language naturally and easily, with good pronunciation and intonation and with grammatical correctness. In these classes of various sizes, pupil participation was at a maximum. Children could talk to one another and answer the teacher's questions. An effort was being made to vary the patterns of speech in some ways and the classes were not restricted to parroting dialogues, series, or basic sentences. Sentences learned by rote were applied to the personal experiences of the children and they were often given the opportunity to change both grammatical and lexical items in material previously memorized. At various grade levels in these schools we observed continuous progress in the development of the skills.

Although the stated objective was the same in the other schools, we saw little or no evidence that similar results were being achieved. In many classes, most of the time was spent in playing games, counting, reciting lists of words, and singing songs. These activities were not organized in such a way that advancement in language learning was apparent. The emphasis was on entertainment rather than on instruction. In many cases the teacher did all the talking and there was little evidence that the pupils understood him. In some schools where pupils were participating, they were speaking with poor pronunciation and using incorrect forms without adequate correction. We seldom saw an organized attempt to use the patterns of the language in a variety of ways.

We found no clear agreement about the definition of the cultural objective. One administrator stated quite readily that the goal of his FLES program was "to develop an understanding of the peoples of the world." Other commonly expressed objectives were international understanding, world peace, improvement of human relations among various ethnic groups in the community—all in the name of culture as a secondary objective in the foreign-language program. To accomplish these objectives unrelated facts and clichés about the country or the people were often being taught. For example, in one sixth-grade class the teacher talked for fifteen minutes, partly in English and partly in Spanish, about the Spanish temperament.

In some schools "culture" was not considered separately but interpreted as the behavior patterns of the people who spoke the language, and therefore a part of the linguistic content of the program. These schools attempted to fulfill the cultural objective by providing children with the opportunity to participate in the culture through their use of the language. For instance, classes in these schools learned to use the polite and familiar forms of address in appropriate situations without confusion. They also learned the gestures which accompany certain expressions, such as the handshake, the bow, or the heel click with greetings. We found this interpretation of culture often in the schools where there was most evidence of the advancement of the linguistic skills.

In some instances, there seemed to be no clearly defined purpose for the elementary-school language program except a desire to meet a popular demand. Some of these programs were started because of parental or community pressures, often without sufficient understanding by administrators and teachers. Some school administrators were influenced by the need to maintain good public relations but paid insufficient attention to the quality of the program. Some who began "plan as you go" types of programs told us that they are now warning their colleagues against succumbing to an educational fad.

Teachers: The official classification of a FLES teacher is less important than the quality of his instruction. We observed teachers of various types: language specialists, elementary-school classroom teachers, high-school and college instructors who taught part-time in the elementary school, and part-time instructors from the community. The most effective teachers, regardless of classification, had competence in the spoken language, a knowledge of the theories of language learning, and the ability to apply these theories effectively. In most of the school systems using specialists (foreign-language teachers engaged full-time in the elementary school) the teachers were competent in the language, although not always competent in methods and techniques of instruction. Many had attended workshops, lasting from three days to a year, which gave them official status although there was no evidence that they had always provided good training.

One program had four specialists, three of whom were teaching lists of nouns and verbs in sentences which always conformed to English word-order patterns because they had been taught in a workshop that anything else would confuse American children.

Many language programs throughout the country were staffed, willingly or otherwise, by elementary-school classroom teachers. A great majority of these teachers have no foreign-language background. One of the most widespread notions is that a teacher need know only a little language to teach in the elementary school. Some school administrators did not hesitate to let a teacher conduct FLES classes although they would not consider him for a moment for such an assignment in the secondary school. Just as prevalent was the idea that the teacher can learn along with the children or keep one lesson ahead of them. In one program involving forty-nine classroom teachers, a language workshop was conducted weekly where the current lesson was presented and discussed. Attendance was voluntary. Teachers were supplied with mimeographed and recorded materials. In the classrooms English was the language most used and the instruction centered around lists of words (nouns, verbs, prepositions, pronouns), since this was obviously the only control the teacher had of the language. We encountered several other similar situations.

Enthusiasm and interest were often the ruling factors in choosing teachers to staff a program. We saw very enthusiastic teachers whose lack of language competence made their teaching ineffective. When pupils imitate teachers with poor pronunciation, their pronunciation turns out to be equally poor.

Elementary-school classroom teachers who had a sufficient command of the language obtained ex-

cellent results when properly trained and supervised. We saw several examples of classroom teachers who had become fine FLES teachers because they had had the opportunity to observe good teaching and had benefited from a valid in-service or college program. In every case their training had been carefully planned and directed and they were supervised frequently.

One midwestern school system which used able classroom teachers very successfully conducted a two-hour weekly workshop where teachers were trained in the language. The coordinator did not allow any classroom teachers, however willing, to conduct language classes until they achieved competence in the language. Only at this point did their training in how to teach a FLES class begin.

In some school systems high-school teachers spent part of their time in elementary-school instruction. In one we visited where almost all high-school teachers taught some elementary-school classes with careful training and supervision, the whole language program benefited. These teachers understood the complete language program and were able to apply many of the same techniques at both levels. But a high-school teacher we observed in another system sat in a primary-school class for thirty minutes and listened to each child recite twenty-seven parts of the body in French.

In a few communities we saw language classes taught by Junior League volunteers, by native speaking parents, and, in two classes, by second-year French students from the local high school. In most of these situations there was no training and no supervision, since the school administration did not consider it had any right to impose upon these assistants. One administrator remarked that she always enjoyed visiting these classes because she never knew quite what to except.

Materials: Although there was some similarity in basic content, there were marked differences in the organization of the material, its use in the classroom, and its value for language teaching. In many programs children learned hundreds of words in order to be able to carry on what the teachers term "free conversation." The children were rarely able to use these words in meaningful sequences. Where they were expected to invent, to guess, or to know something they had never learned, the results were feeble. In other programs, where children were asked to make use of known words in previously learned constructions, comprehension was at a maximum and their facility with the language quite apparent.

Some elementary-school courses of study considered the acquisition of vocabulary to be the chief aim. Systems often boasted of the thousand words their children had learned after one year of language study but ignored the fact that these youngsters were unable to use their many words in any way other than reciting lists or identifying objects. Children in some school systems learned and retained complicated structures which were important because of their frequency in the spoken language; other children spent months learning to say "It is a dog," "It is a pheasant," "It is a wig," "It is a daffodil." Animals (domestic and wild), colors, numbers, parts of the body, names of fruits and vegetables were the most common and the most frequently repeated areas of study. These categories, for the most part, were taught as words in isolation.

We saw many classes where fourth-grade pupils could count to 100 by 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, and could solve rather complicated oral problems in arithmetic in a foreign language. To be sure, numbers are easy to teach. For this reason they are often over-emphasized and are not taught in proportion to the part they play in communication. Many of the workbooks we saw required more coloring and lettering ability than language skill.

To teach the children to salute the American flag and to sing "The Star Spangled Banner" in a foreign tongue is contrary to the cultural aims of a good foreign-language program. When we asked one teacher who was doing these things if she would also do them in Russian she immediately said that this would be unpatriotic. One of the advantages of starting foreign-language teaching in the elementary school is that children of this age are able to identify themselves easily with another culture and enjoying participating in it. Needless to say, children in other cultures do not pledge allegiance to the American flag.

Songs, when carefully selected and properly used, can play a significant role in a language program. Authentic songs belonging to the foreign culture will not only provide variety in the language class but contribute to the child's appreciation of the culture. However, songs translated from English or expressly composed for the celebration of an American holiday like Thanksgiving do not serve this purpose.

A popular practice throughout the country is the fairy-tale approach to language learning. Stories of this type may have a limited place in a language program, but they are ineffective when used as an entire course of study. In many instances one-third of a class period was spent climbing up Rapunzel's golden hair or following Jack up the beanstalk.

The authors of several curriculum guides seem to think that the most important aspect of their materials is the amount of fun they provide for the student. Language learning can certainly be a pleasurable experience. We observe good FLES teachers who stimulated interest and made language learning enjoyable and profitable. Very few of the popular games which we saw used in FLES classes were instructional devices. They were usually translations of American games of the rainy-day variety that did little to increase a child's ability to use the language. "Tic-Tac-Toe" and "Simon Says" in a foreign language are two examples. Effective FLES teachers rarely found it necessary to resort to such devices to maintain interest in the classroom.

Surprising and distressing was the frequent use of locally prepared FLES materials. Although few regular classroom teachers write materials for the other subject areas in which they teach, over half the FLES teachers attempted to write their own. With few exceptions, these courses of study were inadequate. Any committee preparing materials should include a native speaker, a linguist, a person with a knowledge and understanding of FLES, and someone trained and experienced in elementary language teaching. In the better programs, all the FLES teachers decided upon one set of materials and taught from them. Realizing the basic concept that language is a sequence of skills built one upon another, they did not borrow from unrelated courses of study. This borrowing practice was quite common among teachers who thought that their pupils had much to gain from the best of several authors. The choice of basic professional materials including all the necessary components of a good language course was one of the most important factors contributing to successful FLES programs.

Methods: The finest materials available do not, in themselves, guarantee development of language skills. Only a teacher who knows the proper techniques and has the ability to use them in a classroom can achieve maximum results. Since many of the teachers were interested in learning about good techniques in order to improve their own teaching, we shall describe the best practices that we have seen.

Good language classes showed evidence of daily preparation of lessons. The best teachers had carefully prepared their classes and memorized the materials to be presented so that they could conduct the class without referring to books and papers. These teachers included new material, provided for the reintroduction and review of known material and always allowed for variety within a class period. The teachers who conducted their classes at a fast tempo, yet provided flexibility

without allowing time lags to develop, best maintained pupil enthusiasm and interest. The most effective teachers moved around the classroom and involved all pupils. These instructors spoke at a normal rate of speed and required the same performance of their pupils.

On the use of English in the classroom, there were four points of view: (1) Those who completely avoid the use of English feel that it is not needed for clarification of meaning. But, in many classes, children were confused. Often a great amount of time was spent trying to explain in the foreign language the meaning of abstract words or phrases. (2) Where the foreign language was being used by the student with the maximum comprehension and ease, English played a minor but very significant role. Students themselves spoke in the foreign language. The teacher used English only to introduce unknown material and, occasionally, to check comprehension. It was never used for communication. (3) Some teachers did not discriminate between the two languages but used them interchangeably or even in the same sentence: "My doll's *pelo es rojo*." "I need a *garçon* to go to the *tableau*." (4) Last, but by no means infrequent, were classes conducted entirely in English with the occasional insertion of a few foreign words.

In many classes pupil errors went undetected or uncorrected. Where no concern for accuracy of pronunciation and intonation was in evidence, no control of the sound system of the language was obtained. In several school systems we were told that the elementary school did not concern itself with pronunciation, as that was the job of the high-school and college instructors. In classes where correction of sound and form was immediate, the teacher supplied the correction, which was followed by choral and then individual repetition.

In general, there seemed to be little regard for the way in which materials were introduced, taught, and reviewed. Generally the teacher is the model for what the child learns. The most successful teachers gave their children the opportunity to hear the model often enough to master the sounds. They also made certain of total group and individual participation. Other teachers relied heavily on a few students who were able to perform after a minimum of instruction. In one or two cases we saw good discs being used to supplement the teacher's work.

Many teachers expected children to learn without sufficient practice. In a class of twenty-five students, a teacher got thirteen incorrect answers before the correct one. Students who did not have the opportunity to review skills systematically seldom retained what they had learned. Children who could use things learned in one situation in a new situation were usually products of a program which called for constant review and the reintroduction of materials.

There are special problems connected with the transition to reading and writing in a program which has concentrated on listening comprehension and speaking. A number of schools were attempting to make this transition at different levels of instruction. The majority of teachers indicated their desire for more information and assistance in solving this problem.

Administrative Problems: In most cases, administrators have been realistic in their attitude toward teacher scheduling. Very few school systems require their teachers to teach more than the equivalent of ten 15- or 20-minute classes a day in two or more schools, regardless of class size. The greatest amount of learning takes place in programs where classes meet four or five times a week. The periods (15 to 20 minutes) are usually long enough to permit the introduction of new material, drill, and review, yet they are not so long that the children lose interest. Since language is increment learning, systems offering short and frequent periods of instruction usually accomplish more than those with a few long classes.

Some programs are reserved for enrichment because administrators feel that, though FLES has a valid place in the elementary curriculum, it can not be offered to all students because of a lack of finances or qualified staff, or because of scheduling problems. And there are those who believe that not all children will benefit from foreign-language instruction. This may be true, but there are no prognostic tests to decide that some elementary-school children can not learn to understand and speak a second language. In the majority of schools visited, entire classes were offered the opportunity to study the language. Some of the better programs seemed to prove that more than the top third or fourth of a grade benefit from language instruction. In at least seven of the better systems where language instruction was offered to every child, regardless of intellectual ability, excellent learning was taking place.

Good teaching and learning were observed in classes of as many as forty-five children. And poor teaching and little learning were observed in classes with as few as five students. Although many teachers interviewed thought that twenty to thirty students was the best class size, the amount of learning did not necessarily increase as the size of the class diminished.

Continuity: A successful and continuous program must take into account those skills learned in the elementary school and develop them throughout the grades. In one school system which achieved excellent results, the seventh grade teachers were building on the language learned in the elementary school. Children in the classes not only spoke Spanish fluently but were able to understand and read material of considerable difficulty. Practice in the speaking and listening skills continued to play an important part in each class. In other school systems the whole approach to language changed in the secondary school and children were taught by a strictly grammar-translation method, sometimes beginning in grade 7, sometimes in grade 9. In such situations, listening and speaking skills deteriorated seriously.

Some seventh-grade classes mixed beginners with pupils who had two or more years of FLES training. Where substantial learning had taken place in the elementary school, the FLES groups were usually bored and, in any case, were not advancing according to their ability. Where the two groups merged successfully, there was some question about what had been achieved in the FLES classes. In communities where the FLES program is the first step in the long sequence of language learning, administrative problems were considered before the program was begun. If FLES graduates have to start all over again in grade 7 or 9, the FLES program is either worth very little or is not considered the first step in a total program. Administrative problems should be met before the program is started.

Coordination and Supervision: We most often observed the best results where there was a good coordinator of language instruction. Many school systems have overlooked the necessity of this important post. Others merely gave the title to a teacher who had neither the time nor the necessary training to fulfill the duties of the position. In many instances, the coordinator was nothing more than a figurehead without authority.

The effects of coordination can be far-reaching. A good coordinator can do much to make a program successful, but a poor coordinator can cause disorganization, encourage bad practices, and prevent good teachers from achieving the best results.

The effective coordinators observed were successful for a combination of reasons: (1) The administration recognized their ability and therefore gave them the authority to organize and carry out the language program. (2) They were chosen for their demonstrated effectiveness in the classroom and their ability to organize and supervise a good language program rather than for length of service alone. (3) They knew well at least one of the languages being taught and were

familiar with the others. (4) They had an understanding of the principles of language learning on all levels and their application to the classroom. (5) The ability to be self-critical and to evaluate objectively the effectiveness of the program was an important qualification. Those who exchanged criticisms and suggestions with the members of their staffs and who insisted upon excellence achieved the best results.

When the coordinator provided adequate supervision, when teachers were given the opportunity to exchange information and ideas, when they were encouraged to visit one another and to meet frequently with the coordinator, results were good.

In many cases children in the same grade of the same school system were using different basic materials. One of the most important steps in the teaching of language is to be able to provide for transfer and review of known structures. Each teacher must know what has been learned before so she can build upon previous knowledge. By selecting and using one basic course of study and by teaching its contents thoroughly, the entire staff is familiar with what children have learned through the years and is consequently able to plan a continuing program.

Evaluation: Some school systems made no attempt to evaluate individual pupil performance in the FLES program. No grades were reported to parents. These schools believed that grades serve no useful purpose and often create needless apprehension or an exaggerated sense of competition.

In some cases, records by individual teachers, usually in the form of comments concerning special abilities or problems, were kept on file and added to from year to year. They were said to be particularly useful when recommendations or selections were being made for the continuation of foreign-language study. In most schools some kind of mark was given, usually based on the subjective judgment of the teacher. It was often not in terms of achievement but in terms of pupil participation. In some systems the grading was even left to the untrained classroom teacher who had done nothing more than remain in the room during the language lesson. Some school administrators said that pupils must be graded in any subject which was to have official status.

Some schools tried to give one or two tests a year, but few of these could be considered valid. The content of most of the FLES programs observed was vague and haphazard. Accurate measurement depends upon a definite curriculum and good materials. Both of these were still lacking in the majority of FLES programs.

Conclusions: If the sixty-two school systems that we visited are representative, we are forced to conclude that the state of FLES in the United States needs a lot of improvement, because:

(1) A majority of the FLES programs that we observed do not fulfill the primary aim of such a program—teaching the four language skills—even when this is clearly stated as their objective. Sometimes the teacher is weak; just as often the weakness lies beyond the teacher's control, in the materials or the scheduling.

(2) Many programs emphasize such other aims as "world understanding" or "broadened horizons" to the extent that it is a clear misnomer to call them *language* programs. We saw no evidence of effective evaluation of the teaching directed toward these objectives.

(3) There is such a diversity of linguistic content that a general evaluation of results using a single test or series of tests appears to be impracticable.

(4) From the widespread emphasis upon learning lists of words, we conclude that a majority of the FLES teachers think of language as words to be learned in isolation and then strung into "conversation." They showed no awareness of the interacting systems of structure or pattern that are basic to each language.

(5) Many programs, started without planning and provision for the materials, the instruction, and the eventual integration with junior- and senior-high-school courses, are considered "experimental," but there is no clear statement of the conditions and terms of the experiment and no provision for an evaluation of its results.

(6) The most obvious weakness is lack of teachers with sufficient skill in the language and training in methods. (This is no reflection on the sincerity, the enthusiasm, or the good will of the instructors. How many of us, with no knowledge of music and unable to play the piano, could successfully teach a roomful of little children to play that instrument?)

(7) In many schools—certainly in the majority of those we visited—FLES is conceived of as merely a preview or prelude to "real" language learning (which will begin in the high school) rather than as a serious, systematic attempt to develop attitudes and skills.

(8) Few programs are planned as an unbroken, cumulative sequence from the primary through the junior high school, partly because of the lack of appropriate teaching materials for the junior high school, but more because of the inadequacy of the FLES work itself.

Before further encouragement is given to an increase in the number of FLES programs or to any kind of quantitative expansion, there is a clear need, among teachers, administrators, professional organizations, and state and national departments of education, for a qualitative improvement of FLES. Nevertheless, and despite the eight-point indictment above, one conclusion is inescapable:

(9) The evidence—scattered in bits and pieces throughout the country—makes it perfectly clear that with an enthusiastic teacher who has an adequate command of the foreign language, materials that reflect the nature of language and how it is learned, and expert supervision, American youngsters can learn and are indeed learning foreign languages very well in our elementary schools.